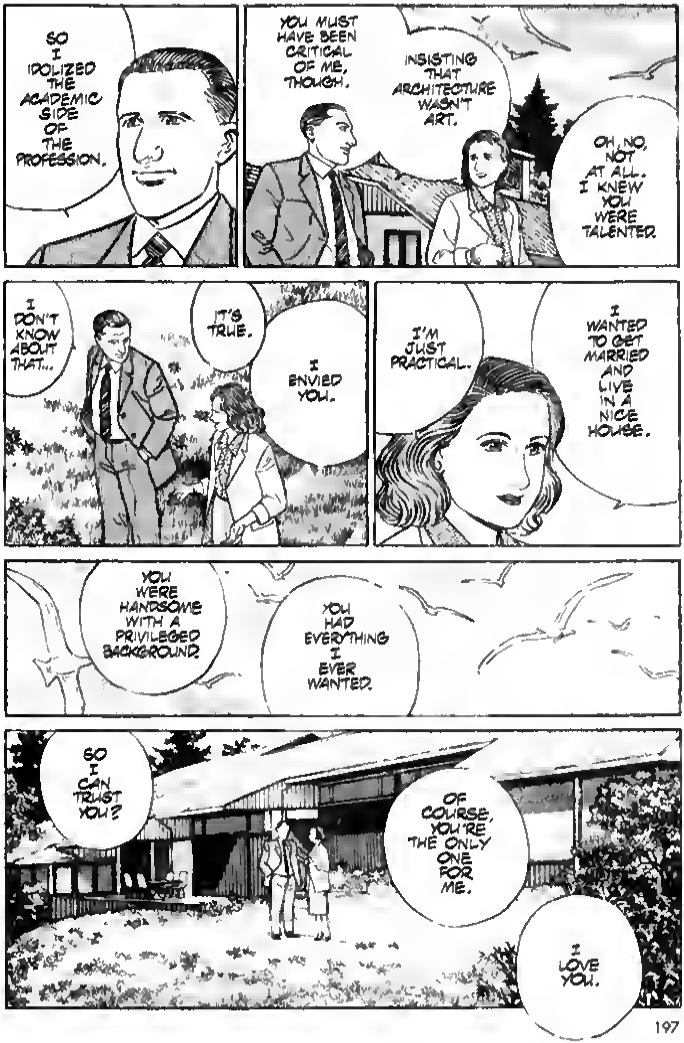
Chapter 7: A BASEMENT

WOW, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
YEP.
THIS SUMMER HOUSE WAS BUILT WHEN WE WERE SENIORS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.
BACK THEN I WAS DRAWING AVANT-GARDE DESIGNS THAT WERE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD..
TO PLEASE MY POST-STRUCTURALIST PROFESSOR.
I WAS YOUNG.
MY DAD WAS ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTS IN NEW YORK.


SO I IDOLIZED THE ACADEMIC SIDE OF THE PROFESSION.
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF ME, THOUGH.
INSISTING THAT ARCHITECTURE WASN'T ART.
OH, NO, NOT AT ALL. I KNEW YOU WERE TALENTED.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
IT'S TRUE.
I ENVIED YOU.
I'M JUST PRACTICAL.
I WANTED TO GET MARRIED AND LIVE IN A NICE HOUSE.
YOU WERE HANDSOME WITH A PRIVILEGED BACKGROUND.
YOU HAD EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED.
SO I CAN TRUST YOU?
OF COURSE, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE FOR ME.
I LOVE YOU.

MY FATHER...
JUST BOUGHT AN ISLAND IN MAINE.
WOW.
THAT'S AMAZING.
HE WANTS ME TO DESIGN A SUMMER HOUSE FOR THE ISLAND.
THAT'S WONDERFUL!
IT WILL DO WONDERS FOR YOUR CAREER. HE WANTS TO SHOW YOU OFF AS THE NEXT UP-AND-COMING ARCHITECT!
NO, BETTY...
...THAT'S NOT IT.
WHAT?
HE WANTS TO SEE IF I'M WORTH ANYTHING.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YOU DON'T KNOW MY FATHER.
HE CAN'T STAND PEOPLE WHO CAN'T MAKE MONEY.
WHAT'S WRONG?
I'M AFRAID OF HIM.
...
ALL RIGHT, THEN...
...I'LL HELP YOU.
BETTY...
MY FATHER LOVED THE LOOK OF THIS HOUSE. BUT YOU DESIGNED IT, INSTEAD OF ME.
YOU UNDERSTOOD HIS TASTES.
I WAS LUCKY.
NO, YOU REALLY ARE TALENTED.

I RECOMMENDED YOU TO WORK FOR MY FATHER..
...AND YOU BEGAN TO WIN BIG COMPETIONS.
...
UN-BELIEVE-ABLE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO SUCCEED ...
...LIKE THIS.
BUT WE ALWAYS WORKED TOGETHER.
I KNOW.
I JUST WORK FOR YOU, DARLING.
DO YOU REMEMBER THE BASEMENT POOL?
THE INDOOR POOL YOU DESIGNED.
I WANTED US TO HAVE A PLACE TO SWIM.. WE COULD SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES GROWING OLD HERE.
YOU KNOW ...
I'M NOT SO YOUNG ANYMORE.

I KNOW THAT.
I'M ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT YOU.
BETTY ?
HMM
OH GORDON
SNAP
CHIRK
WHAM

I'M FINE WITHOUT YOU NOW, THOUGH.

HM?
WHO COULD THAT BE?
WHO'D COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?!

YES, WHAT IS IT?
THIS IS A PRIVATE ISLAND I DON'T RECALL ASKING ANYONE TO COME HERE.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH BETTY STEWART.
BETTY ?
WHAT KIND OF APPOINT-MENT?
I WAS TO DELIVER THIS PAINTING ...
...HERE TODAY.
I SEE.
BETTY WENT FOR A WALK, SO SHE'S OUT.
I CAN WAIT.
...
IT'S AN IMPORTANT PAINTING.

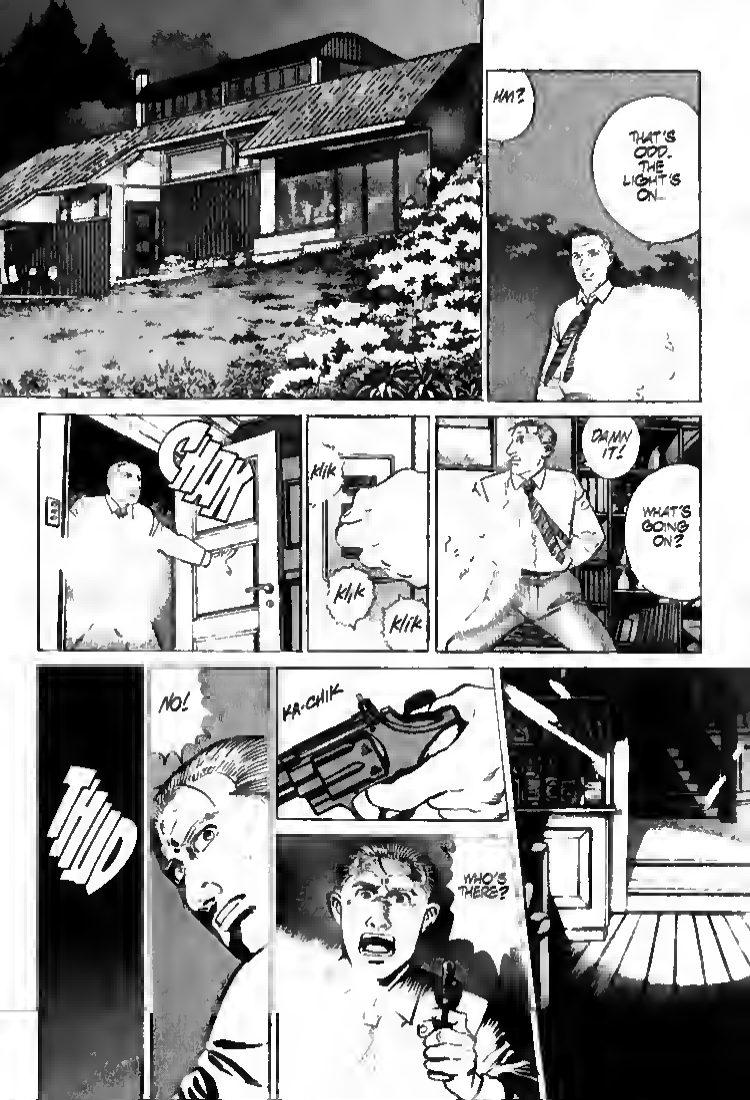
TUNNEL
MY NAME'S GORDON ALEXANDER.
PLEASE.
CALL ME BENKEI.
BENKEI?
IT IS THE NAME OF AN ANCIENT, FEARLESS HERO IN JAPAN.
I SEE.
I'VE HEARD THAT THE JAPANESE ASSUME DEATH COMES FIRST INSTEAD OF LIFE, THAT THEY SEE IT ALL BACKWARDS.

BY CONSIDERING LIFE TO BE MEANINGLESS...
...THEY CAN ASSUAGE THEIR FEAR OF DEATH.
...
BOTH LIFE AND DEATH ARE POWERFULLY PRESENT.
THE DEAD CAN COME BACK...
...AND MAKE US FEAR FOR OUR LIVES.
...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ONE.

THE SUN IS SETTING.
I'M GOING TO FIND BETTY.
...
SHE WALKS AROUND THE ENTIRE ISLAND. IT'S A LONG WALK.
I THINK YOU SHOULD GET GOING.
VERY WELL, THEN.
I WILL COME BY TOMORROW.
...
WHAT KIND OF PAINTING DID BETTY ORDER?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A LOOK?
...
NO.
I'LL SAVE IT FOR TOMORROW, HA HA HA!

RRRRRR
SHE'LL BE FOUND TOMORROW SHOULD CAUSE QUITE A STIR.
FSSHHH
AHHO
whew.

FSHHHH
YOU FELL INTO A DEPRESSION OVER YOUR DESIGN FOR THE NEXT COMPETITION.
YOU FELT THE LIMITS OF YOUR TALENT.
SO YOU COMMITTED SUICIDE ON THIS ISLAND, WHERE YOU DESIGNED YOUR FIRST BUILDING.
BETTY.
YOU WERE JUST LIKE MY DAD.
YOU WERE TALENTED, TOUGH AND HAD NO QUALMS ABOUT HURTING OTHERS WITH YOUR TALENT.
I COULDN'T HELP IT.


HM?
THAT'S ODD. THE LIGHT'S ON...
SLAM
KLIK
KLIK
KLIK
DAMN IT!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
THUD
NO!
KA-CHIK
WHO'S THERE?

BETTY!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
SLUMP

W-WHAT'S THIS...?
TAK TAK TAK
!

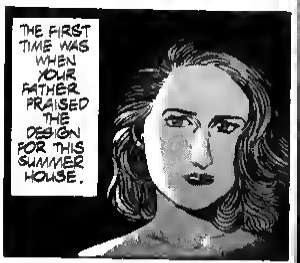
ARGH!
BRAK
BRAK
BRAK

CHUD.
HFF
HFF
HFF
HFF
TAK
TAK
TAK
AIEE!
ARGH!
HFF
AHH
HFF
HFF
HFF
HFF

SPLICH
HNNH!
HFF
HFF
THK THK THK
HFF
HFF
HUH
..GORDON.
GORDON...
...
GORDON
UNGH
...
BETTY..

AHH!
BETTY...

YOU MADE REAL LOVE TO ME FOUR TIMES


THE FIRST TIME WAS WHEN YOUR FATHER PRAISED THE DESIGN FOR THIS SUMMER HOUSE.

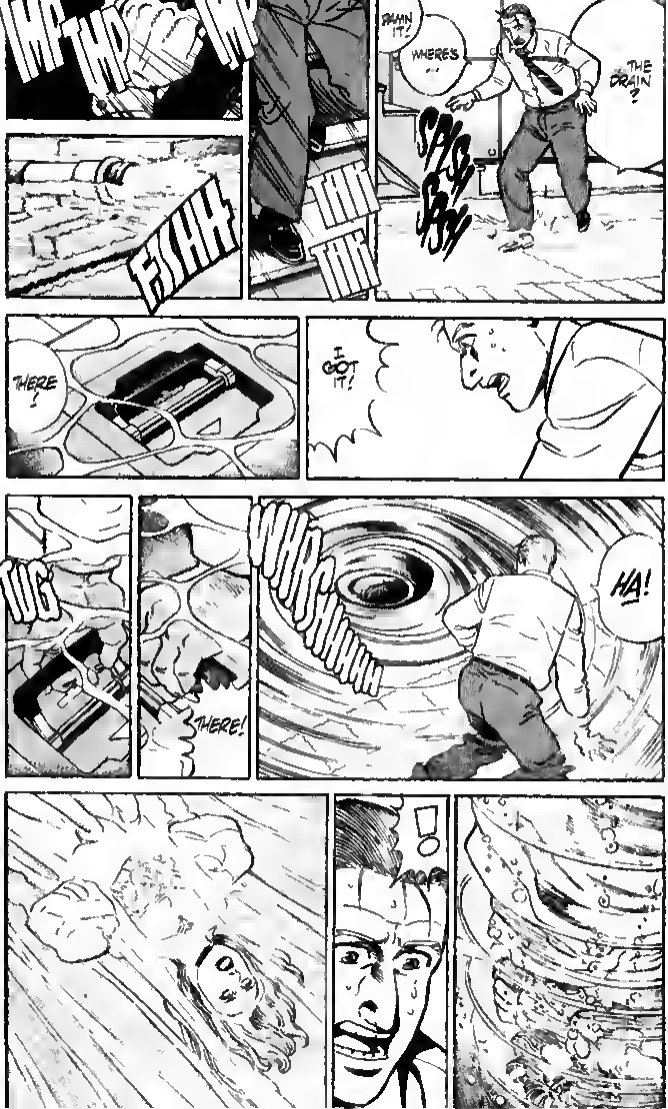
UR...
URGH!

THE SECOND TIME WAS WHEN WE WON THE FIFTY MILLION DOLLAR COMPETITION.
STOP IT!!
THE THIRD TIME WAS WHEN YOU BECAME BOARD PRESIDENT AFTER YOUR FATHER DIED
BETTY!

URGH!
BETTY?
STOP IT...
STOP IT!
STOP IT!
THE FOURTH TIME HAPPENED A MONTH AGO. I COULDN'T FIND A REASON SO I THOUGHT YOU REALLY LOVED ME.
BUT THEN I REALIZED YOU WERE GOING TO GET RID OF
HAPPENED EVERY TIME YOU NEEDED SOMEONE ELSE'S HELP.

THE
WAUD
CHUD
PSHA!
Y'GHL
GLUG
GLUG
GLUG
GLUG
AIIEEEE
THP
THP
THP
OPEN
UP!

PLEASE!
I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM BETTY.
THP THP THP
"I LOVED YOU TOO MUCH."
FSHHH
AAAA...
I'LL PAY YOU ANYTHING! I PROMISE!
THP THP
PLEASE ...HELP ME!


THA-THP-THP
DAMN IT!
WHERE'S ..
THE DRAIN?
SPLSHSHSH
THP THP
FSHH
THERE!
I GOT IT!
TUG
THERE!
WHRRRRRRRR
HA!
!

FHOK
SPLSH
AH!
MNNN..
GULG GULG GULG
AAAA

THE
END

About the Creators

JINPACHI MORI was born in 1958 in Negesahi, Japan. He is a manga writer and essayist, and his photography appears regularly in his monthly column "Tabi suru Kamera" (Journey Camera) in *Be-Pal* magazine, published by Shogakukan, Inc. He recently finished writing the serialized folklore-manga *Tejikaraa*.

JIRO TANIGUCHI was born in 1947 in Tottori, Japan. After high school in 1966, he became an assistant to the professional comics artist Kyota Ishikawa. His previous works include *Unprotected City, Ambra, Trouble Is My Business, The Age of Bocchan, Blanca,* and *Hotel Harbour View,* the latter published in English translation by Viz Communications.